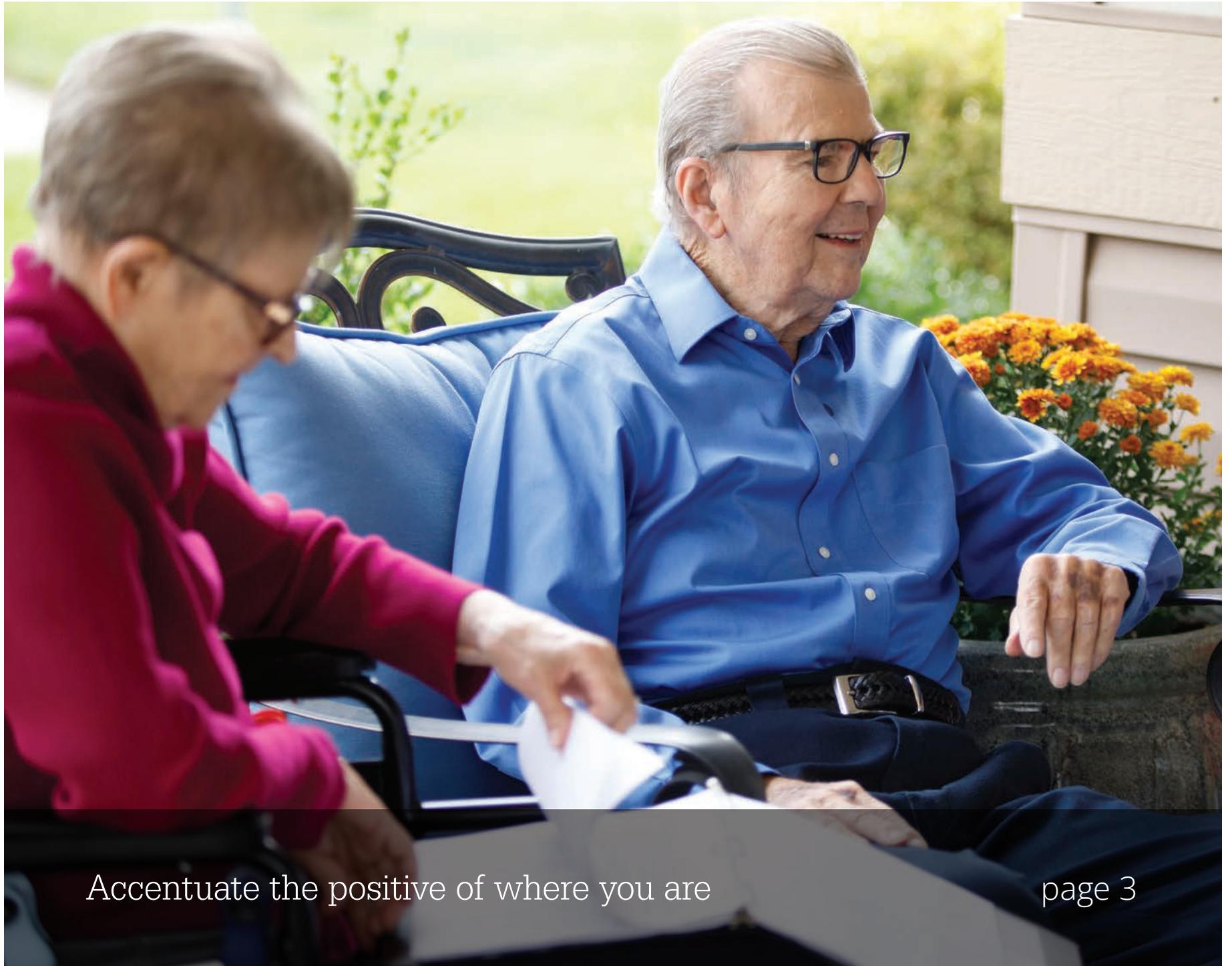


The Bluestem Post



Accentuate the positive of where you are

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On the cover: Lee Suderman and Di Rempel Suderman enjoy time with friends at Suderman Assisted Living. The Sudermans share their reflections on assisted living inside. Phot by Gavin Peters.

LIVE WELL WITH BLUESTEM COMMUNITIES

Bluestem Communities is a nonprofit organization in south central Kansas that serves seniors through various living options, care settings and care-centered services. Bluestem Communities locations include Kidron Bethel Village in North Newton, Schowalter Villa in Hesston and Bluestem PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly) in McPherson and Hutchinson.

MISSION STATEMENT

Bluestem Communities' mission is to have a positive impact on quality of life by promoting lifelong wellness, purpose, choice, genuine connection and personalized care with Christian compassion.



To learn more about Bluestem Communities' services and locations visit bluestemks.org

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Lee Suderman and Di Rempel Suderman recognize that assisted living is the best fit for their physical and health capabilities. They choose to live each day with gratitude and positivity.

Accentuate the positive of where you are

Lee Suderman and Di Rempel Suderman think Bing Crosby was on to something when he sang one of his famous songs – “You’ve got to accentuate the positive; eliminate the negative; latch on to the affirmative; don’t mess with Mr. In-Between.” It’s the kind of philosophy the Sudermans apply to their everyday as they navigate life’s journey and the reality of changing care levels.

As Bluestem Communities independent living residents, the Sudermans planned that they would eventually live in all of the Bluestem Communities care levels on the Kidron Bethel Village campus – moving to assisted living and later health care as their health needs determined – but in 2022, the need for assisted living came unexpectedly and sooner than they had planned.

“One of the reasons we chose to live at Bluestem Communities in the first place is that it offered all of the levels of care we would eventually need, and having our name on the assisted living list meant we could make the transition rather quickly, even though it was unexpected,” said Lee.

The Sudermans acknowledge the shock and challenges that forced a move so unexpectedly, but as they have had time to adjust to the new realities of their physical and health-related capabilities, as well as to life in assisted living, they have made the choice to view each day with positivity and gratitude.

“No matter where you find yourself – in any level of care – there is always a positive to find,” said Di. “Right now, in assisted living, I try to remain as independent as possible, but because

of the health challenges I have, it’s just the reality that I need to ask for help with some things. I could be down about the fact that I can’t do everything I once could, but I can still dress myself, and that’s a positive for me. It’s all about attitude and an acceptance of change.”

The Sudermans understand the hesitations that can come for people who think about moving to a higher level of care, but they believe that attitude and acknowledgement of the changes is a strategy for acceptance.

“Yes, of course you lose some independence when you move to a higher care level, but you’re losing that independence regardless of if you are in your own home or a different care setting,” said Di. “That’s just a reality of aging. You have a choice to either celebrate or be fearful. I choose to be

continued on next page

Accentuate the positive of where you are cont.

grateful for the people who are here to help me and make my life more comfortable than if I were trying to struggle through on my own.”

With regularly scheduled activities and friends and neighbors to visit with at meals, the highly social Sudermans have found that assisted living continues to fit well with the things they love.

“There are always opportunities for socialization when we need it,” Lee said. “When we were in independent living, we had to initiate gatherings like that on our own, but now, just going to a meal in the dining room is an opportunity to connect with other residents and staff. So many of the staff have become like second family to us!”

The Sudermans are also aware, though, that socializing and participating in activities are not everyone’s cup of tea, and assisted living serves them just as well.

“Some people choose not to do activities, and that’s okay, too,” said Di. “Each person is able to choose every day what they want to do. Some enjoy just staying in their own space, reading or working on hobbies. I don’t do all of the activities because I’m also focused on writing my vignettes about my travels. Having assistance for everyday tasks has really created the time for me to be able to do this – time that I didn’t have before coming here – and I’m grateful for that.”

The services and amenities Bluestem Communities offers, such as a wellness center, physical, occupational and speech therapy, and a restaurant under the same roof as their home, are other things the Sudermans particularly appreciate.

“I have always loved to entertain, but I don’t have the space

to do that in our home anymore, nor would I be able to do all the preparation it entails,” said Di. “But the great thing is that we can still entertain friends in the restaurant just down the hall. It’s a beautiful location and delicious food, and I don’t have to clean or do any cooking.”

Even more than the amenities, however, they are grateful for the quality of care provided to them, pointing specifically to having access to medical professionals any time they have a concern, and for dietary managers who happily cater to their dietary restrictions.

“The fact of the matter is that we are both aging and dealing with everything that comes with that,” said Di. “It’s comforting to have a nurse available whenever we need one to help decide if an issue needs follow up with a doctor or a trip to the ER. Having experienced a medical emergency at home by ourselves, we know how scary that can be, so having someone who can help evaluate those things with us is really valuable.”

As they reflect on their life journey that has brought them to the present day, the Sudermans are able to find parallels in the present to other times they faced change. Before retirement, for example, they traveled to and lived in many places all around the world, always embracing each new adventure that lay before them.

“What, then, is so different in moving from one care level to another?” Di pondered. “We’re still the same people no matter where we live. We have all made many adjustments in our lives and we’ve come through them just fine. Moving through the care levels is just another adjustment. It’s just putting the accent on a different syllable, so you might as well accentuate the positive.” **TBP**

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Embracing wellness and health: The holistic way to a healthy life

by Teara Leonard, Director of the Kidron Bethel Village Wellness Center

Wellness and health are not mere health trends but rather vital components that enrich our lives. Over time, health and wellness have evolved from being limited to the absence of disease to a holistic concept that encompasses physical, mental and emotional wellness. Taking care of each dimension of well-being improves our quality of life and enhances our resilience and happiness.

THE INTER-RELATED DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS

1. **Physical wellness** encompasses maintaining a healthy body by exercising, proper nutrition, adequate sleep and preventive healthcare. Physical wellness boosts energy, prevents chronic diseases and promotes longevity.
2. **Mental wellness** is about cognitive health, being in the right state of mind and having manageable emotions. It's about stress management, building resilience, mindfulness and self-compassion. Mental wellness helps us give expression to our feelings in a healthy way, enabling better relationships with ourselves and others.
3. **Social wellness** means having positive relationships with family, friends and the wider community. It gives a sense of support, strengthens communication skills, and creates a sense of community and purpose.
4. **Spiritual wellness** involves having a sense of purpose and meaning in life, whether or not one has specific religious faith. Spiritual wellness promotes contemplation, meditation, and seeking inner peace and balance.
5. **Occupational wellness** is finding a level of satisfaction and enrichment from within one's career and understanding the importance of financial wellness. Both of these are critical in order to minimize stress and improve quality of life.

WAYS TO IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLNESS

1. **Implement a balanced diet.** Eating a diverse range of nutritious foods and essential nutrients, including fresh fruits and vegetables, healthy fats, whole grains and healthy proteins such as chicken, salmon and tofu, supports overall physical health and enhances energy levels.
2. **Get moving.** Aim for 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise weekly. Regular physical activities boost physical fitness and mental clarity.
3. **Sleep well.** Aim for seven to nine hours of deep sleep every day. A regular sleep schedule and soothing nighttime habits can improve sleep and health.
4. **Engage in mindfulness and meditation.** Taking time to engage in mindfulness practices or meditation can help alleviate stress, improve self-awareness and foster emotional balance.
5. **Build connections.** Form friendships, engage in your community, and turn to friends and family for support. This will create social bonds that ultimately make you happier.
6. **Set realistic goals.** Set achievable short-term and long-term goals to help keep you motivated and give you a sense of achievement, contributing to occupational and financial wellness as well.

The path to wellness is unique and never-ending, requiring awareness, dedication and being proactive to lead a healthier, more balanced life. **TBP**





Anita Kehr
Schowalter Villa Chaplain

Beauty in scars

By the time we get to a certain age, we have scars. We have scars on our bodies, we have scars on our hearts, and we have scars in our relationships. Sometimes what we really want to do is hide those scars in any way that we can, covering them up and doing our best to forget they ever existed.

However, those scars are reminders of the stories in our lives. For instance, my husband has a scar on his thumb that reminds him of trying to make a kite when he was a boy (the pocketknife slipped). The harder scars tell different stories. Sometimes they mark a time when we were broken open enough to move in a new direction. And sometimes those scars remind us of what we have fought to keep intact.

The Japanese have an artform called *kintsugi*, which mends precious broken pottery with gold. Chana Bloch, a 20th-century writer, has used the artform of poetry to reflect on it. As you read her poem, “The Joins” reflect on your own scars:

Now I don’t want to break things purposefully just so that “the joins” may be made beautiful, but I do want to see the good that might come out of hard things. Scripture tells us that God is the potter and we are the clay (Isaiah 64:8). I imagine that God is the originator of *kintsugi*—putting our pieces together in new and beautiful ways, refashioning us through the painful parts of our lives, and healing us along the way.

May you see the beauty in your scars. **TBP**

THE JOINS BY CHANA BLOCH

What’s between us
seems flexible as the webbing
between forefinger and thumb.

Seems flexible but isn’t;
what’s between us
is made of clay

like any cup on the shelf.
It shatters easily. Repair
becomes the task.

We glue the wounded edges
with tentative fingers.
Scar tissue is visible history

and the cup is precious to us
because
we saved it.

In the art of *kintsugi*
a potter repairing the broken cup
would sprinkle the resin

with powdered gold.
Sometimes the joins
are so exquisite

they say the potter
may have broken the cup
just so he could mend it.



Bluestem PACE to raise awareness with grant funding

Bluestem PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly) has been awarded a grant along with the two other programs in Kansas to increase awareness and education about PACE programs.

The three organizations are splitting the \$1 million grant from the American Rescue Plan to launch strategies that provide medical partners and the public with education about and engagement with the services PACE offers.

PACE is a national care model that has existed since the 1970's to provide comprehensive medical and social services to people age 55 and better who are dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid benefits. The care provided through PACE is meant to allow seniors to continue living in their own homes for as long as possible.

Bluestem PACE was added as part of Bluestem Communities in 2016, serving a six-county region of Kansas that includes McPherson, Reno, Harvey, Marion, Rice and Saline counties. It serves more than 120 participants with day center locations in McPherson and Hutchinson. **TBP**



Chris Deck, Bluestem PACE Rehab Director, (right) works with a PACE participant on therapies. Photo by Gavin Peters.

UPCOMING EVENTS 2025

PACE RACE 5K RUN/WALK

April 5
McPherson

Register at:
bluestemks.org/events

BLUESTEM U

Author Series

April 28
North Newton

Register at:
bluestemu.org

GARDEN PARTY

June 7
Hesston

Register at:
bluestemks.org/events

FIREWORKS EXTRAVAGANZA

July 4
North Newton



Bluestem communities re-accredited in dementia care program

Following site visits in the fall of 2024, Bluestem Communities' long-term care campuses of Kidron Bethel Village and Schowalter Villa have both been re-accredited in the Comfort Matters dementia care program.

"It is vital that Bluestem Communities operate with best practices in caring for people diagnosed with dementia," said James Krehbiel, Bluestem Communities president and CEO. "Having accreditation as a Comfort Matters provider demonstrates a commitment to care practices that provide the best quality of care and quality of life for people living with dementia."

Comfort Matters is a research- and evidence-based philosophy and care practice that provides a holistic and integrated approach to improve quality of care and life for people with dementia. The award-winning program was developed through more than a decade of research around person-directed health care practices and the latest science on supporting people who live with dementia. Focuses of the program include individual flexibility, freedom and respect in a safe and nurturing space where care is infused with compassion and connection, and reducing the use of antipsychotic medications in those with difficulty thinking.

Schowalter Villa first became a Comfort Matters-accredited provider in 2016, followed by Kidron Bethel Village in 2019.

At Bluestem Communities, Comfort Matters is a philosophy that extends beyond nursing care and permeates the entirety of the campuses and staff. Both campuses require their entire staff in all departments- more than 500 people combined - complete Comfort Matters training.

"We believe that every staff member plays a part in providing outstanding care, so it's important that every person fully understand the kind of person-centered care we strive to provide," said Krehbiel.

During their most recent site visit, the Comfort Matters accreditation team noted the staff dedication to and connection with residents at both Kidron Bethel Village and Schowalter Villa, a key component of Comfort Matters practice.

"The communities of Kidron Bethel Village and Schowalter Villa deeply understand the value of comfort for people living with dementia," said Tena Alonzo, director of the Comfort Matters program and member of the accreditation team. "Bluestem Communities residents live better lives because of each staff member's ongoing dedication."

To learn more about Bluestem Communities' memory care program, visit bluestemks.org or call 888-388-7445. **TBP**

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MOISES, *Bluestem PACE Participant*

Connect and engage through volunteerism



Linda White works on a baking project with assisted living residents. White enjoys sharing her hobbies with others through volunteering. Photo by Rachel McMaster.

One of the wonderful parts of life is that it gifts each person with an array of abilities, knowledge and experiences. You can keep those parts of you fresh and sharp by volunteering your time and talents right in your own community.

“There are so many volunteer opportunities right here at Bluestem Communities that are a wonderful way for independent living residents to connect more widely to the whole of campus in assisted living and health care,” said Sheri Esau, Bluestem Communities Community Outreach Coordinator.

Volunteering after retirement can offer a number of benefits, both for the individual and for the community, including staying active and engaged, and building social connections.

Larry and Janet Dixon, independent living residents at Kidron Bethel Village, are well known on campus for their volunteer activities.

Several times a week, Larry traverses the halls of the main Kidron Bethel Village building, spending time visiting one-on-one with assisted living and health care residents, or stepping in wherever a hand is needed during more organized group activities. Larry’s work is done in conjunction with chaplain Dawn Yoder Harms, offering visits to residents who could benefit from the personalized

connection, and knowing there is power in relating with other people.

“I like to be with people,” said Larry. “When I was in eighth grade, I spent the summer driving a tractor. I was so lonely. The tractor didn’t talk to me. For the next summer I took a job in a Chevrolet agency and was much happier learning to know people in the community.”

Meanwhile, Janet serves the Kidron Bethel Village community by covering the Welcome Center desk one day per week during the Welcome Center Manager’s lunch break. She also puts her professional skills as an English as a Second Language teacher to work in the wider community by teaching English to Ukrainian families who have moved to the area.

Both Larry and Janet recognize their need for connection with others, and have been avid volunteers, both during their working years and now in retirement.

“Volunteering keeps me in touch with people and broadens my horizons,” said Janet. “I didn’t want to retire and spend my time sitting in the rocking chair. I’m a people person and like to be out among them.”

Through their volunteer work, the Dixons have built relationships with residents and staff members at other care levels, giving them a knowledge and understanding of what they themselves may experience as residents someday. Having that kind of first-hand glimpse into assisted living and health care can alleviate some of the trepidation and unease around the unknown that can accompany thoughts of living in other care levels.

For Linda White, an independent living resident at Schowalter Villa, volunteering has helped her stay connected to things that she loves, such as baking and spending time with people.

White began volunteering her time in assisted living in 2012 when she and her late husband, Frank, began serving root beer floats to residents a couple of times a month. More than 12 years later, White continues that tradition, now with her cousin Elva Sommerfeld, who also lives in Schowalter Villa independent living.

An avid baker, White also decided a few years ago to continue building connections in assisted living through

continued on next page

Understanding Fund Advancement

At Bluestem Communities, the role of Fund Advancement is two-fold: secure vital resources that ensure residents receive compassionate, quality care regardless of their financial circumstances, and connect with the passions of those who give generously. The first cannot happen without the second, as what fuels the work of Fund Advancement is the donors who connect with the heart of the mission.

“Bluestem Communities’ donors are the lifeblood of our mission, and it’s a privilege to partner with them,” said Derek Yoder, Vice President of Fund Advancement. “Their generosity not only helps us provide top-tier care for the residents and participants we serve, but also strengthens the bond within our communities. As a non-profit organization, every gift received directly benefits residents and participants, and makes a lasting impact. We are honored to work alongside such dedicated partners in our journey to enrich the lives of seniors.”

The role of Fund Advancement is to ensure the financial sustainability of the organization and the well-being of its residents and participants. They do this by fostering relationships with donors and educating them about the needs of residents and participants, securing support annually for the benevolent funds at each of the campuses, generating support for campus specific capital campaigns and building the Bluestem Legacy Endowment that safeguards the organization’s ability to fulfill its mission well into the future.

BENEVOLENT FUNDS

Each Bluestem Communities location maintains its own benevolent fund to assist health care residents and PACE participants who, due to unforeseen circumstances, are unable to cover the full cost of their care. Securing these resources means no resident or participant has to worry

about losing their care due to financial hardship. Giving to these funds expresses caring and compassion, and makes a significant impact in the lives of seniors who receive care and services from Bluestem Communities.

- The Good Neighbor Fund supports Bluestem PACE.
- The Health Care Benevolent Fund supports Kidron Bethel Village.
- The Good Samaritan Caring Fund supports Schowalter Villa.

The established funds are supported by individual donor contributions, and also through various events throughout the year.

BLUESTEM LEGACY ENDOWMENT

The Bluestem Legacy Endowment ensures the organization’s sustainability to meet future needs with stability and security. This endowment is built primarily through estate and individual gifts rather than annual giving to the benevolent funds.

WAYS TO MAKE A GIFT

- Cash, check or credit card.
- Automatic Monthly Contribution.
- Required Minimum Distribution.
- Gifting commodities.
- Home refund donation.
- Will, trust or estate gift.
- Charitable Gift Annuity
- Donor Advised Fund
- Life insurance beneficiary.
- Memorial gifts or honorariums.

To learn more about how you can support the work of Bluestem Communities Fund Advancement, or to talk about options that fit your giving philosophy and desires, call 316-836-4879. [TBP](#)

Connect and engage through volunteerism cont.

leading a baking class once a month.

“There are a lot of ladies in assisted living who also love baking, so this has been a fun way for us to connect over that shared interest and allow them to continue experiencing that,” said White, who worked for 40 years as a psychiatric nurse. “Sometimes, some of the men join us as well, and even if they haven’t done it much, they have fun with it. I love hearing their stories and memories.”

As the Dixons and White understand well, volunteering is an enriching way for retirees to remain active, engaged and fulfilled in their post-career years, and helps to prepare them for care transitions later down the line.

If you are interested in volunteering at Kidron Bethel Village or Schowalter Villa, contact Sheri Esau, Community Outreach Coordinator, at 316-836-4821 or SheriE@bluestemks.org. [TBP](#)

Carriage Factory Art Gallery serves as an intersection for art and community

The Carriage Factory Art Gallery in downtown Newton, Kansas, is a place where art, community and history intersect.

Located on Sixth Street, just a block off of Main Street, the Carriage Factory Art Gallery strives to provide opportunities to learn, experience, perform, share and celebrate the arts for artists and those who appreciate art at any level.

“This began in 1968 as the Newton Fine Arts Association, and was really a collective group of artists and people wanting to support the arts,” said Mary Lee-McDonald, director of the Gallery.

In 1983, the group moved into the building that was once a prosperous wagon and carriage factory adjoining a blacksmith shop with a history that can be traced back to 1883. Today, the Carriage Factory Art Gallery embraces its past with a gallery that presents its history in addition to the support of about 70 member artists, shows in the main gallery that rotate about every eight weeks, and smaller shows and art sales in the Susan Koehn Gallery.

“The organization has always been very artist-based and with a mission to share art with all ages in South Central Kansas,” said Lee-McDonald. “We are honored to be able to serve our local artists and wider community in this way.”

Lee-McDonald and the Gallery board are dedicated to being a resource for the community, as well as promoting the wider downtown economy.

“People always think there is nothing to do in this small, Midwestern town, but that’s not the case at all,” said Lee-McDonald. “We want the Carriage Factory Art Gallery and the entire Newton downtown to be a destination, so we’re really focused on having the kinds of events that bring people here.”

Some of the regular events the Gallery hosts are Second Saturdays, which are an instructor-led craft time for families; Third Thursdays in conjunction with the wider downtown at which they sometimes host live music or other events; classes in a variety of art styles and mediums; and a Kids’ Art Carnival that includes hands-on activities, live music and more. Many of the events are also free and open to the public, or available at a reasonable rate.



Support the local economy and explore the Carriage Factory Art Gallery and neighboring local businesses. The Gallery welcomes visitors to enjoy the art and historical exhibits, shop the unique items in the gift shop, participate in events, and is also open to hosting groups for tours and activities.

Carriage Factory Art Gallery is open Tuesday through Friday, noon to 5 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and on every third Thursday of the month, noon to 8 p.m. Learn more at carriagefactoryartgallery.com or follow on Facebook. **TBP**



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The Bluestem Post is published to share information, fellowship and fun with participants, residents, staff and friends of Bluestem Communities.

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